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ABSTRACT

This practicum was designed to increase collaboration between special education resource room teachers and regular elementary education classroom teachers. Procedures were developed to ensure that students with learning disabilities (LD) who were placed in regular classes received appropriate instructional and assessment modifications. Training in the collaboration model was provided to resource room teachers. Resource teachers completed "Student Alert" forms which described the student's strengths and weaknesses and listed necessary testing modifications for each LD student, and sent them to classroom teachers. Resource teachers and classroom teachers then collaborated in completing a Teaching/Assessment Plan (TAP) for each student, which included curriculum goals, instructional strategies, and assessment strategies. An evaluation questionnaire completed by regular education teachers at the conclusion of the practicum indicated that they changed their instructional and assessment techniques as a result of the collaboration process and felt more confident in teaching LD students. Appendices provide the questionnaires, a report card and revised report card checklist, the "Student Alert" form, a TAP document, and classroom and resource teachers' responses to the evaluation questionnaires. (Contains 27 references.) (Author/JDD)

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Assisting Regular Education Classroom Teachers of Elementary Learning Disabled Students Through Collaboration

by

Natalie Austin Fulwider

Cluster 53

A Practicum I Report Presented to the
Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

1994

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

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Director of Special Education

Port Chester, New York

January 10, 1994

This practicum report was submitted by Natalie Austin Fulwider under the direction of the advisor listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

Approved:

May 9, 1994
Date

Mary Ellen Sapp
Mary Ellen Sapp, Ph.D., Advisor

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ABSTRACT

Assisting Regular Education Classroom Teachers of Elementary Learning Disabled Students Through Collaboration. Fulwider, Natalie Austin, 1994: Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Collaboration / Learning Disabled / Elementary / Resource Teachers

This practicum was designed to increase collaboration between special education resource room teachers and regular education classroom teachers. Procedures for collaboration were developed to ensure that learning disabled students who were placed in regular classes (grades K through 6) received appropriate instructional and assessment modifications. Training in the collaboration model was provided to resource room teachers. Resource teachers completed Student Alert Forms which described the student's strengths and weaknesses and listed IEP mandated testing modifications for each learning disabled student and sent them to classroom teachers during the first few weeks of school. Resource teachers and classroom teachers then collaborated and completed a Teaching / Assessment Plan (TAP) for each student which included curriculum goals, instructional strategies, and assessment strategies. The TAP was used by the classroom teacher during the first quarter of the school year.

Results of the Evaluation Questionnaire completed by teachers at the end of the first quarter, indicated that regular class teachers changed their instructional and assessment techniques as a result of the collaboration process. Additionally, the teachers reported that they felt more confident in teaching learning disabled students as a result of collaborating with the resource teacher.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

Diversity is the hallmark of this suburban village school district in the northeastern section of the United States. Thirty-three hundred ethnically and socioeconomically mixed students attend four elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school in this village of 23,000 people. Past and present waves of immigration have created a mixed pot of heritages and the school children reflect this diversity. The student population is made up of the grandsons and granddaughters of Italian and Jewish immigrants, the sons and daughters of African-Americans, and children who are themselves recent immigrants from Latin and South America. They are from families with varying degrees of wealth. Their parents are professionals, laborers, unemployed, and are sometimes missing. Many come from one parent families and/or are below the poverty level.

Work Setting

A declining economy, coupled with the rise of immigration, contributes to a scarcity of educational funds. Class size has increased while support staff ratios

have decreased. Elementary class sizes range from 26 to 28. District support staff consists of four school psychologists, one social worker, and three speech therapists. There are six guidance counselors who serve grades 5 through 12.

To meet the challenges of increasing enrollment, the district has re-organized its elementary schools. Kindergarten through fourth grades are currently housed in three "neighborhood" schools and one "magnet" school, while fifth and sixth grades have become part of the middle school (now grades 5 - 8). Former neighborhood schools now include children bussed from across town due to excess enrollment at the magnet school. As a result, most elementary classrooms in all four schools now include children with diverse backgrounds.

The four kindergarten through fourth grade schools range in size from 290 to 440 students. One principal heads each building. There are no assistant principals at this level. The fifth through eighth grade school has two principals and one assistant principal. The assistant principal is assigned as the liaison to the special education office.

The number of children referred to special education has increased dramatically over the last four years. Forty-five referrals were processed in the 88-89 school year while 105 referrals were processed during the 92-93 school year. The number of self-contained special education classes for children classified as learning disabled at the elementary level (kindergarten through sixth grade) has increased from three classrooms to six classrooms during the last four years. The number of learning disabled students remaining in regular classrooms with resource room support has also increased. Within the last four years, the number of learning disabled resource room students, kindergarten through sixth grade, has increased from 33 to 61.

Special education services currently exist in each of the five school buildings that include elementary students. Although not every building contains a self-contained special education classroom, every building houses a resource room program. The resource room program is designed as a pull-out program where students receive supplemental instruction in small groups taught by a special education teacher. There are currently five full- and part- time resource room teachers assigned to the five buildings which service elementary school children. Two elementary schools have a full time resource teacher; the others have part-time resource teachers. Space allocations for the resource room in each building vary, ranging from a full-size classroom shared with other support staff members to an unused storage closet.

Writer's Role in Work Setting

The writer is a school psychologist assigned two days per week to one of the elementary schools. School psychologists in this district are assigned as the case managers for each student in their building who is classified as educationally handicapped and who receives special education support. In that role the school psychologist is responsible for monitoring the progress of each student receiving special education services and for trouble-shooting problems. The school psychologist is also responsible for managing all building referrals to special education, conducting all psychological and education assessments, serving as psychologist at Committee on Special Education (CSE) meetings, serving as a member of each building's child study team, counseling students in need, responding to crisis situations, and consulting with school administrators regarding program development.

In addition to these responsibilities, the writer also serves three days a week as the co-chairperson of the CSE for the entire school district. In this

capacity, the writer has the opportunity to become familiar with the 336 school children in this community who receive special education services, and to assist in the development of their Individual Educational Plans (IEPs). In addition to working with the special education student and teachers, this role provides the writer with the opportunity to communicate with the regular education classroom teachers who attend CSE meetings.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

Presently there are 61 students in grades kindergarten through six, who are classified learning disabled and who are assigned to regular class with resource room support provided by five full- and part-time special education teachers. The Committee on Special Education has developed an Individual Educational Plan for each of these students which details goals and objectives to be worked on by the special education resource room teacher. The students are scheduled to attend the resource room between 36 and 60 minutes per day, as determined by the CSE and written in the IEP. Thus students spend most of their day within the regular classroom setting.

These students have unique learning characteristics which have resulted in their being classified as learning disabled. They require special considerations and techniques in order to be successful in the regular classroom. The resource room program is designed to supplement regular classroom instruction by providing the student with specific instruction in the areas of need outlined on each student's IEP. Regular classroom teachers remain responsible for direct instruction in all subject areas. Regular classroom teachers assign grades on

report cards and are held accountable by the school district administration for the achievement of these students. To provide learning disabled students with opportunities to master the curriculum, regular classroom teachers need to modify and to individualize their instructional strategies. So that learning disabled students can demonstrate their achievement, teachers also need to adapt assessment instruments. At the present time, this modification and adaption does not happen on a consistent basis. Students' individual needs may not be met in the regular classroom setting.

Briefly stated then, the problem is that some regular classroom teachers do not use appropriate instructional and assessment strategies with the learning disabled students placed in their classrooms.

Problem Documentation

Informal interviews conducted during the first semester of the 92-93 school year reveal that seven of the eight teachers interviewed felt that they are not provided with specific strategies for teaching learning disabled students. They state that they are given only minimal written information about individual student needs and learning styles. Of the eight regular education teachers interviewed, seven teachers indicated that communication with the resource room teacher was less than adequate. Five teachers also reported that they did not feel comfortable with the responsibility of teaching learning disabled students. They stated that they should either have more support or that the students should not be in their classroom.

Interviews with three resource teachers indicated that although they felt they had suggested instructional, management, and assessment modifications to the regular classroom teachers, many teachers did not use them. The resource teachers reported that regular teachers' comments indicated that they believed

the students did not need the modifications, even though the students may be failing or doing poorly.

A review of 15 report cards of learning disabled resource room students reveals that the approach to assessment of students is inconsistent. Some teachers assign grades based on effort, some assign grades based on unmodified tests, and some assign grades based on modified assignments. This is confusing to both parents and professionals. If a child receives a good grade, it is difficult to accurately determine whether the child is achieving or just being "passed" on effort. Teacher interview data suggested that there is little agreement on how learning disabled students should be graded. The review of report cards indicated that six learning disabled children were receiving less than satisfactory grades.

Attendance of regular education classroom teachers at student review meetings is poor. Only six of 17 regular education teachers (grades K - 4) invited to planning meetings during the spring of 1993 actually attended. A follow-up yielded the following responses: "I couldn't get coverage," "I didn't know there was a meeting," or "I didn't think I was needed." In fact, all teachers receive written invitation to meetings, and class coverage is available to those who request it. These procedures are clearly stated in the district's procedure handbook and have been repeated at faculty meetings.

Causative Analysis

Several factors have contributed to the present situation including: past practices, lack of inservice training, time constraints, and state regulations.

Historically in this district, the role of the resource teacher was as an "itinerant tutor" with little or no interaction with the regular classroom teacher. The itinerant tutor was paid on an hourly basis for direct student contact only.

There was little incentive to consult with the classroom teacher. Four years ago the position was retitled "resource room teacher" and full-time special education teachers were hired. Some regular class teachers who were teaching in the district prior to this change continue to see the role of the resource teacher as "itinerant."

Neither regular class teachers nor resource teachers have been provided with mandatory staff development regarding the changing role of the resource teacher or in methods of consultation. Two resource teachers serving elementary school children have taken coursework outside of the district regarding the role of consultation. Regular classroom teachers have not been advised as to the role of the resource teacher or the benefits of formal consultation.

One obstacle blocking effective consultation and communication between the resource room teacher and the classroom teacher has been the time constraints of both. Most resource teachers are assigned to at least two buildings each day. Regular class teachers at the elementary level have few "preparation" times built into their schedule, resulting in opportunities for consultation being limited to before school, lunch, or after school. The resource teacher travels during lunch, and is available in each building for only one-half of the day which may not coincide with the classroom teacher's schedule. Additionally, the district has frowned on resource teachers building "consultation time" into their schedules, and has maintained that resource teachers should carry the maximum caseload allowed by state regulations.

The school district has been advised by the state evaluators that a student's IEP may not be provided to the regular classroom teacher. Present practice is that all communication about a child's learning style has been communicated verbally by the resource teacher to the regular education

classroom teacher. The state evaluators have also advised the district that the IEP should only address the student's special education program. These interpretations of the regulations contribute to the separation of the special education and regular education programs, rather than facilitate the integration of student programming to meet student needs.

The combination of these factors has led to the current situation: classroom teachers understanding neither their role nor that of the resource teacher; classroom teachers not being available when the resource teacher is available and vice versa; neither resource teacher nor regular education teacher understanding the value of consultation; and, ultimately, to regular classroom teachers not using appropriate instructional and assessment strategies with learning disabled students.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Problems in the relationship between regular education and special education have been traced to the enactment of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1975 (amended and renamed Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) in 1991). Since then, children with learning difficulties have been classified as educationally handicapped (learning disabled) and provided with special education services. Will (1986) describes what has resulted as a "dual system" of delivery services, noting that the responsibility for educating children with learning difficulties has shifted from regular education to special education. As special educators took over responsibility from regular classroom teachers, a division between systems developed which has led, unintentionally, to the increased segregation of children with learning disabilities. With increased segregation has come further confusion of the roles and responsibilities of both regular classroom and special education teachers. Lack

of clarity about roles and responsibilities has frequently been cited as a cause of regular classroom teachers not using appropriate instructional strategies (Johnson, Pugach, & Hammitte, 1988).

Many researchers (Baker & Zigmond, 1990; Stainback & Stainback, 1988; Zigmond & Baker, 1990) describe current instructional practices in the regular education classroom as being inappropriate for learning disabled students. These authors find that regular class teachers do not typically individualize instruction, but most often conduct teacher-directed group lessons. All children are routinely assigned the same work, mostly workbooks and worksheets. Baker and Zigmond (1990) state that the emphasis in the regular classroom seemed to be on keeping the room orderly and quiet. The teachers' "mindset was conformity, not accommodation" (p. 525).

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP, 1990) has been vocal in calling for alternative delivery systems to bridge the gap between regular and special education programs as a way of increasing the success of learning disabled students in regular classrooms. In response, researchers (NASP, 1990) have been investigating present practices of consultation since NASP recognizes that alternative delivery systems require a "blend" of regular and special education services with success dependent upon the communication and consultation skills of both staffs. The research into the present practice of these skills reveals some disturbing trends.

Although regular education teachers report that they do not feel they have the skills to adapt instruction for special education students (Semmel, Abernathy, Buters, & Lesar, 1991), collaboration and consultation between regular classroom teacher and special education teachers is often inadequate (Glomb & Morgan, 1991; Meyers, Gelzheizer, Yelich, & Gallagher, 1990). As Levine (1992) states in

her discussion of the problem, regular classroom teachers are rarely provided with specific skills and strategies to deal with learning disabled students. Glomb and Morgan (1991) surveyed resource room teachers regarding the strategies they used to improve student performance in the regular classroom and found that teachers responded to classroom teachers' requests for specific assistance, but they almost never "coached" regular teachers on the use of effective strategies. Time constraints are most frequently cited as obstacles to effective consultation (Glomb & Morgan, 1991; Johnson, Pugach, & Hammitte, 1988; Meyers, et. al., 1990). Lack of adequate training in the consultation process is also frequently mentioned as a cause of limited consultation between regular and special education teachers (Glomb & Morgan, 1991).

Regular education teachers are frequently not included in the planning process for their learning disabled students. Sixty-seven percent of regular classroom teachers report that they are not included in the process of developing IEPs (Pugach, 1982). Furthermore, most IEPs do not include goals and objectives for that part of the day that the student spends in the regular classroom. This failure to integrate goals and objectives between regular and special education has been cited as a contributing factor to the inappropriate instructional strategies often used in the regular classroom with learning disabled students (Rosenfield, 1989).

Thus, the literature supports the existence of the problem of regular classroom teachers not using appropriate strategies with learning disabled students placed in their classrooms. Reasons cited for this problem include the artificial division between special and regular education and the failure of regular educators and special educators to communicate effectively with each other.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The following goals and outcomes were projected for this practicum. As described in Chapter II, the special instructional and assessment needs of many learning disabled students are not being met in their regular classrooms. The goal of this practicum is to facilitate a process of communication which enables regular class teachers to provide learning disabled students more appropriate instructional and assessment opportunities in their classrooms.

Expected Outcomes

1. At the end of the 12-week implementation, regular education classroom teachers and special education resource teachers will indicate that communication between classroom teachers and resource teachers has improved.

2. At the end of the 12-week implementation, regular classroom teachers will indicate that they are using new instructional and assessment strategies with the students in their classrooms.

3. At the end of the 12-week implementation, regular classroom teachers will indicate that they feel more confident teaching learning disabled students.

4. At the end of the 12-week implementation, data will show that classroom teachers' attendance at student review meetings has improved and that classroom teachers who have learning disabled students in their classrooms have attended at least two conferences.

5. At the end of the 12-week implementation, a review of report cards will indicate that teachers assign grades using consistent and clear criteria and that learning disabled students are making academic progress in their regular classes as a result of teacher use of appropriate instructional strategies in their regular classes.

Measurement of Outcomes

At the conclusion of the practicum, regular class teachers and resource teachers will be asked to complete a written Evaluation Questionnaire (see Appendix A) and to return it to the writer. Two forms of the Evaluation Questionnaire were developed for this practicum, one for the classroom teachers and one for the resource room teachers. Acquiring feedback from the perspectives of both regular education classroom teachers and special education resource room teachers will provide information which will be important in making future recommendations. The questionnaire developed for the classroom teachers assesses their confidence level regarding teaching learning disabled students in the regular classroom, their perceptions of whether they have changed their instructional and assessment practices as a result of participating in this practicum, and their perceptions of the collaboration process. The questionnaire developed for the resource room teachers assesses their perceptions of the collaboration process and their opinions regarding whether classroom teachers changed their strategies. Each form of the Evaluation Questionnaire asks teachers to determine whether they strongly agree, agree,

have no opinion, disagree, or strongly disagree with a series of statements. At the conclusion of these statements, there are two open-ended questions requesting feedback on the collaboration process.

A Report Card Checklist (see Appendix B) was developed and used to objectively review report cards to determine if the learning disabled students were being graded using clear and consistent methods at the conclusion of this practicum.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

Learning disabled students provided with pull-out resource room support programs spend most of their day in regular classrooms instructed by regular teachers. In the writer's school district, teachers are not always meeting the individual educational needs of these learning disabled students because the regular classroom teachers do not use appropriate instructional and assessment modifications and adaptions. The literature offers several possible solution strategies for improving instruction to learning disabled students in the regular classroom.

Many educators stress the importance of formal consultation between the regular class teachers and the resource room teacher (Glomb & Morgan, 1991; Reisberg & Wolf, 1988; Schloss, 1992; Schulte, Osborne, & McKinney, 1990; Stainback & Stainback, 1988; West & Idol,1990). Several models have been developed to facilitate consultation and collaboration among teachers. It is important to review these models with an eye toward sorting out the common features which make them successful.

Ribich and Debenham (1987) studied the effects of using a team approach in a high school setting. Each team was made up of an administrator, a special education teacher and a regular education teacher. The special education teacher developed instructional accommodations based on the student's handicap, psychological evaluation, observed behavior, and current educational levels, and included them on the student's IEP. The regular education teacher utilized the accommodations when providing instruction to maximize the learning situation. The administrator's involvement was seen as critical to insuring that the process worked smoothly. At the beginning of the process, the special education teacher sent a letter to each regular education teacher who taught the student. The letter included information which identified the student (without giving the handicapping condition), included the "accommodations page" of the IEP, and served as an invitation to meet with the special education teacher for a dialogue regarding the student's learning styles, achievement levels, and strengths and weaknesses. Conferences were set up throughout the year. The administrator met with the teachers to determine whether an accommodation report should be sent home with the regular report card. If so, accommodations were listed in a separate letter to the parents. Ribich and Debenham (1987) state that the process worked because it required and insured cooperation and teamwork.

Schulte, Osborne, and McKinney (1990) compared the effectiveness of consultative services combined with instruction, consultative services alone, and direct pull-out instruction for elementary learning disabled students. In the consultative model, special education teachers collaborated with regular education classroom teachers to develop instructional objectives. Lesson plans were designed jointly with consideration given to the learning style of the student and the teaching style of the teacher. The Consultation Evaluation Questionnaire

(CEQ) was administered to classroom teachers at the close of the study. In it teachers reported that they viewed the consultative sessions positively. Consultation in combination with direct instruction was found to have a significantly positive effect on student achievement.

Using a somewhat different approach, Tindal, Parker, and Germann (1990) developed Mainstream Consultation Agreements (MCAs) for learning disabled students at the high school level. The MCAs were contracts which detailed the shared responsibilities of the special education and the regular education teachers. Results suggested that these contracts can be helpful, but only if there is ongoing consultation and monitoring throughout the semester.

Levine (1992) worked with selected teachers of ninth grade students with learning difficulties. She assessed the learning styles of the students and teachers, observed students in their classrooms, and consulted with teachers about specific strategies that would be appropriate for the student in question. This collaborative approach was found to be effective in modifying teacher instructional practices and increasing the success of students in their regular classes.

Another approach aimed at increasing the success of learning disabled students in regular education programs has been the use of curriculum based assessment measures (Stainback & Stainback, 1988; Fuchs, Fuchs, & Ferstrom, 1992). Stainback and Stainback state that "curriculum-based assessment paired with instructional assessment procedures can provide regular educators with the means of determining appropriate instructional programming for the individual student" (p. 26). Fuchs, Fuchs and Bishop (1992) studied the use of curriculum based measurement (CBM) techniques with elementary learning disabled students and found that the use of such measures had a positive effect on

instructional programming. They found that teachers adapted instruction as a result of the student's performance on CBM and that it helped teachers set realistic goals for students.

The assumption underlying the use of consultation as a means to improve instruction to learning disabled students is that accommodations in instruction and assessment have a positive effect on the success of learning disabled students in regular education. Ribich and Debenham (1987) provided support for this assumption when they stated that using accommodations in regular education settings can be a significant factor in increasing the probability of success. Accommodations were said to increase the likelihood of successful experiences for the learning disabled students, facilitate better relationships with regular education teachers, and save time. Stainback and Stainback (1988) agree that "individualized programming," designed to accommodate individual needs, can provide a way to allow for each student's unique instructional needs.

Wang, Reynolds, and Schwartz (1988) describe adaptive instruction techniques as interventions that "are aimed at accommodating the unique learning needs of individual students and enhancing each student's ability to develop knowledge and skills for mastery of learning tasks" (p. 210). Wang's formal implementation model of adaptive instruction is called the Adaptive Learning Environment Model (ALEM). Included in the model are individualized progress plans and diagnostic-prescriptive monitoring and assessment measures. Wang, Reynolds and Schwartz report that ALEM is supported by research and evaluation data which suggests that it leads to positive changes in classroom process. The authors point out that the success of such a model is dependent on "cooperative linkages" between special and regular education personnel.

Keogh (1990) reviews several models designed to facilitate the successful integration of special education students into regular education classrooms and concludes that the most important factor in program implementation is the teacher. As DeCrease (1986) discusses, only the classroom teacher can make the necessary changes in the classroom and therefore it is the classroom teacher who must assume primary responsibility for the students. The special education teacher can play a critical supportive role as "the more that the resource teacher's role is designed to offer real support to the classroom teacher, the more change is likely to occur" (DeCrease, p. 19). The role and involvement of both regular education and special education teachers is crucial. To better meet the needs of "special" students in the regular education system "direct lines of communication among education groups--particularly special and regular educators--should be developed to enable educators to work together to foster change" (Stainback & Stainback, 1988, p. 29).

As the studies above note, collaborative consultation between regular classroom teachers and special education teachers has been found to be an effective method of improving services to learning disabled students in the mainstream. At this point it is important to review the distinction between consultation and collaboration (West & Idol, 1990). Consultation refers to one professional conferring with another professional who is seeking assistance. Collaboration refers to "two or more professionals working together with parity and reciprocity to solve problems" (West & Idol, p. 23). Collaboration is said to require mutual trust, open communication, agreement on the problem, pooling resources to develop solution strategies, and shared responsibility for implementation and evaluation of the strategy. The importance of both regular and special educators being part of the collaborative process has been stressed

in the literature referred to above. As noted, only the regular classroom teacher can make the necessary changes in the classroom. Johnson, Pugach, and Hammitte (1988) correctly caution that regular classroom teachers may appear receptive during consultation sessions, but they may not implement the plans if the feel that the relationships are hierarchical. Therefore it is important that the relationship between regular and special educators be truly collaborative.

Collaborative consultation is described as a multi-stage process (Rosenfield, 1989; West & Idol, 1990). Although researchers differ as to the number and names of the stages, West and Idol present a clear and specific chronology of events in a collaborative consultation process. The first stage is the goal-entry stage, where teachers work together to decide on goals. The problem identification stage comes next when teachers identify and agree upon the difficulties that are facing the student. Next, intervention ideas are generated and appropriate strategies are agreed upon. Implementation responsibilities are discussed, an evaluation of the strategies is made, and the plan is redesigned as needed. It should be noted that this process includes both instructional and assessment components (Rosenfield, 1989).

The specific content of collaborative consultation sessions is equally important as it is often the perceptions of regular education teachers about whether a strategy will work that determines whether they actually implement it in the classroom (Bender & Ukeje, 1989; Johnson, Pugach, & Hammitte, 1988; Whinnery, Fuchs, & Fuchs, 1991). Safran and Barcikowski (1984) investigated the type of information given to regular teachers by learning disability consultants and concluded that it is also important for the consultant to clearly communicate individual characteristics and tailor support services for the individual student. When recommendations and suggestions are individualized, regular teachers can

focus on the specific child's needs rather than on the stereotypes of the disability. In other words, helping the teacher see the student rather than the handicap becomes an important task of the special education consultant.

As Tindal, et al. (1990) found, consultation must be ongoing and not restricted to a one-shot meeting. Keogh (1990) states that it is critical that any plan to integrate special education and regular education be maintainable over time. Teachers often feel overburdened by the extra work a child with a disability brings to the classroom and thus benefit from continued communication.

Reviewing the literature leads to the conclusions that (a) instructional and assessment accommodations can promote the academic success of learning disabled students in the regular classroom, (b) regular classroom teachers need assistance in planning instructional techniques that will be successful with learning disabled students, (c) consultation and collaboration are effective means of providing the regular teacher with accommodation strategies, (d) assessment must be an important aspect of any plan, (e) strategies must be individualized, and (f) consultation must be a process, not a one-time intervention technique.

Description of Selected Solution

Consideration of the writer's school district, in concert with the above discussion of the literature, led to the following solution strategy designed to improve the appropriateness of instructional and assessment strategies by regular classroom teachers of learning disabled elementary school students. This strategy was implemented for learning disabled students, grades kindergarten through six, located in five school buildings and served by five full- and part-time special education resource room teachers.

Collaborative consultation methodology is the cornerstone of this solution strategy. It is designed so that both regular and special education teachers can

experience the value of cooperatively sharing the responsibility for educating learning disabled students. Rather than argue who is responsible and push the responsibility onto one or the other professional, this solution strategy attempts to facilitate collaboration and shared responsibility.

In order for this strategy to be effective, the literature is clear that training is necessary to insure that the teachers understand the collaborative consultation process (Keogh, 1990; Rosenfield,1989; Stainback & Stainback, 1988; West & Idol, 1990). Therefore, at the beginning of implementation of this practicum, resource teachers were required to attend two training sessions to discuss collaborative consultation methodology and the specific details of this practicum. Follow-up sessions were held six weeks into the practicum and again at the conclusion of the practicum to review the process and to make any necessary recommendations for adjustments.

At the beginning of implementation, a Student Alert Form (see Appendix C) was completed by resource teachers and sent to all regular teachers who instructed a learning disabled student. This includes "special area" teachers, such as the physical education teacher, music teacher, and the librarian. Simple courtesy and common sense dictate that is important for regular class teachers to be given information as soon as possible about the individual strengths and weaknesses of the learning disabled student placed in their classroom. In every case, extensive testing and assessment procedures have already been completed prior to the student being identified as learning disabled and this information should be made available to the classroom teacher. Past experience suggests that regular classroom teachers will not "go to the file" and pull out the information. Therefore, it appropriate for the resource teacher to seek out and summarize the necessary information and provide it to the classroom teacher. It

is important that this be in written form as the opportunities for extended conversations in the beginning of the school year are limited. The completed Student Alert form includes information regarding the student's current achievement levels, ability range, learning style, management needs, and medical conditions. Accompanying the Student Alert form was a letter which describes the practicum process discussed below and invites the regular classroom teacher to participate.

During phase 2 of this practicum the regular education teachers who accepted the invitation to participate, and the resource teachers met in collaboration sessions to develop specific instructional and assessment strategies for the student. A formal document, referred to as the Teaching/Assessment Plan (TAP) (see Appendix D), was developed for each student. It was expected that the writing of this document would structure the consultation time and insure that the time was being used productively, an important factor due to the above mentioned time constraints of the teachers in this district. A written plan also reduces the chance of misunderstandings and allows for the review of the plan by both parties.

An important component of this plan was the requirement that the TAP document be developed jointly by the resource teacher and the regular classroom teacher. The TAP document was developed to include (a) specific academic goals for the student in each subject area, (b) instructional strategies that will be utilized by the classroom teacher, and (c) assessment strategies for grading and evaluating student progress. The regular classroom teacher and the resource teacher develop this plan together. The classroom teacher shares the curriculum that must be covered while the resource teacher assists in the development of instructional and assessment strategies that might be helpful for the particular

student. No strategy is included in the plan unless the regular classroom teacher agrees to implement it.

Monthly planning meetings were to be scheduled jointly by the resource teacher and the regular classroom teacher to review, update, and expand the TAP document.

At the end of the practicum, TAP Evaluation Questionnaires (see Appendix A) were filled out by both the regular classroom teachers and the resource teachers to formally evaluate the process and to assess the regular classroom teachers' use of instructional and assessment strategies, their level of confidence in teaching learning disabled students, and their perceptions of the collaborative consultation process. Report cards of the learning disabled students were reviewed using the Report Card Checklist (see Appendix B) to determine whether report cards are now being graded on a consistent and clear basis. Since an assessment component is included in the TAP document, it is expected that teachers will be able to grade report cards accurately and consistently.

Report of Action Taken

Administrative Approval

The Director of Special Education was informed of the practicum plan and final approval for implementation was obtained. Details regarding scheduling training sessions for resource room teachers were worked out to minimize the teacher's absence from their scheduled buildings (a concern of the Director). It was agreed that training sessions would take place during the resource teachers' lunch period which would be extended from 60 to 90 minutes. In order to insure administrative knowledge and support of this practicum, a letter describing the collaboration process was written, co-signed by the Director of Special Education, and sent to the following administrators: building principals, the Assistant

Superintendent for Instruction, and the Superintendent of Schools. A letter was also sent to the five resource teachers who serve students with learning disabilities K through grade 6. Included in this letter were instructions for using the Student Alert Form and a date for the first training session.

It was at this point that the first obstacle to implementation occurred. The Superintendent of Schools questioned the process and requested that implementation be put on hold until he could meet with the Director of Special Education and the writer. This meeting could not be scheduled prior to the second week of school. At this time, the Superintendent was provided with further details regarding the problem that led to the development of the practicum and the research that suggested that the collaboration procedures proposed would be effective. The Superintendent then approved the implementation, but stated that neither training nor collaboration sessions could be held during regularly scheduled instructional time and that teachers must schedule all meetings before or after school, during their lunch break, or during a preparation period. Since resource room teachers are not usually provided with preparation periods, this limited the options regarding the scheduling of training and collaboration sessions. An additional scheduling obstacle developed because the teachers in this school district were working without a contract and some were refusing to attend afterschool meetings.

Training

Five special education resource room teachers who service learning disabled students grades K through 6, were trained to implement collaboration. To minimize the effect of the delay in initiating implementation and to deal with the scheduling problems noted above, the initial training for resource teachers was conducted in small groups or individually. The three resource room teachers

who service fifth and sixth graders met in one session, the other two resource room teachers were seen individually during their lunch times. The second training session was held afterschool and all resource room teachers were able to participate together.

Training in the collaborative consultation method focused on strategies discussed in the above literature review. The objectives of the two training sessions were that teachers would (a) understand the definition and practice of collaborative consultation, (b) be knowledgeable of instructional and assessment strategies that can work in regular classroom situations, (c) be able to individualize strategies, and (d) understand the process that this practicum requires.

The first session provided resource teachers with an overview of the Teaching / Assessment Plan (TAP) collaboration model. The concept of collaborative consultation was introduced and the procedures involved in the implementation of this practicum were reviewed. The rationale for the plan was discussed with appropriate literature citations and references to the evidence of the problem. The purpose of the Student Alert Form was reviewed, and teachers were asked to complete the forms and deliver them to the regular class teachers as soon as possible. Many of the teachers had already begun this process as a result of the letter they had received. At this first training session, resource teachers were provided with copies of the TAP document to review. The format of this first session was informal which allowed teachers to ask questions and offer suggestions.

The second session began with a review of the concept of collaboration. Written information regarding the definition of collaboration, as opposed to consultation, was provided to reinforce the information presented during the first

training session. It was again emphasized that the TAP document must be a joint plan and should not be seen as another form that the special education teacher fills out. Resource room teachers were reminded that the information on the TAP form could be recorded by either participating teacher. Resource room teachers were encouraged to allow the regular classroom teachers to do the writing, since the plan was for activities to be carried out by them.

The major focus of the second session was to discuss and share individualized instructional and assessment strategies that are appropriate for regular classroom teachers to use with students who have learning disabilities. A list of possible strategies was provided by this writer. Prior to the session teachers had been asked to bring strategies that they have found successful. The writer offered to collate strategies into a booklet, but the teachers felt that this was not necessary. In general they seemed to feel comfortable that they had the resources necessary to collaborate with classroom teachers. A sample TAP document was developed by the writer and given to each teacher for reference. The resource teachers were reminded that the TAP process was voluntary for classroom teachers but that they should encourage teachers to meet and collaborate with them.

Teachers were asked to schedule the first meeting with the classroom teacher within one month's time. A record of meetings with teachers was to be kept and forwarded to the writer at the conclusion of the first marking period. It was explained that the goal was to hold two meetings with each teacher during the first quarter of the school year. Resource teachers expressed skepticism that this was realistic and indicated that they had not yet completed the Student Alert Forms. It was reiterated that collaboration works best when it is ongoing, rather than limited to one-shot meetings, and that teachers should try their best to follow

the schedule, but that they should definitely have at least one formal collaboration session completed prior to the end of the first quarter.

It was not possible to schedule further joint training sessions as originally planned due to the scheduling restraints previously mentioned. However, the writer was able to maintain close contact with the resource teachers during the remainder of the implementation period through telephone conferences, individual meetings, and written memos.

Implementation by Resource Teachers

Four of the five resource teachers were able to complete the Student Alert Forms and get them to classroom teachers within the first three weeks of school. They immediately began scheduling individual collaboration sessions with the regular education classroom teachers who accepted the invitation to participate in this project. Twenty-seven regular education classroom teachers chose to participate. These teachers were responsible for teaching 47 of the 61 learning disabled students identified by the CSE. Resource teachers met with each participating classroom teacher at least once in a formal session with the objective being the completion of a TAP document for each student classified learning disabled. Classroom teachers made the initial decision as to what and how many subject areas they wanted to collaborate on (e.g. science, reading, organizational skills). The resource teacher and the classroom teacher agreed on appropriate goals for each student in each area chosen and then jointly developed instructional and assessment strategies to assist the student in meeting the goal. The TAP document was written, copied, and kept by the classroom teacher and the resource teacher. Midway through the quarter, the completed TAP forms were forwarded to the writer, and individual conferences with the resource teachers were held to discuss implementation and any

problems that the teachers were encountering. Additionally, short memos of encouragement were sent to the resource teachers by the writer.

From time to time resource teachers expressed concern that scheduling the many meetings with the classroom teachers was difficult. Classroom teachers have many other building responsibilities, serve on committees after school, or are simply not interested. At these times, the resource teachers were reminded that the difficulty in communicating with the regular classroom teachers was one of the problems that led to the design of this project and that they should continue to encourage teachers to meet. Positive comments from regular classroom teachers that had already developed TAP documents were passed along to the resource teachers.

As implementation continued, a concern of the resource teachers was how the students should be graded on their report cards. This was of special concern to those teachers at the middle school level where report cards are completed using a "computer menu" of comments. A review of the menu indicated that none of the comments appeared particularly appropriate. The two comments generally used in the past, "grade based on below grade level work" and "grade based on effort," were felt to be neither descriptive nor reflective of the school district's philosophy that all students in regular classes are working on grade level curriculum. As a result, a meeting was held with building administrators and two additional comments were added to the menu. These were: "grade based on modified instructional strategies" and "grade based on modified assessment strategies." It was decided these comments would indicate that the student was being graded on the standard curriculum, but that modifications in the presentation or assessment of material had been made. Resource teachers were urged to make sure that when they discussed these comments with classroom

teachers that the teachers understood that they must be able to document and to explain what modifications were used. It was expected that the TAP document would answer this need.

An additional concern regarding report cards was raised by administrators. During the summer, the format of the report card for grades 1 through 4 had changed. As a result, a host of questions and concerns was brought to the table, one being exactly the issue being addressed during TAP collaboration sessions: how are students who have been identified as learning disabled to be graded? After consulting with the special education department, an administrative memo was sent to principals by the Assistant Superintendent which indicated that students who received resource room support should be graded based on the regular grade level curriculum, but that comments regarding instructional and assessment modifications should be included on the report card. It is not known whether this directive reached all teachers, but the resource teachers were informed by this writer.

Data Collection

At the end of the quarter, resource teachers were requested to forward copies of all TAP documents to the writer along with copies of current report cards and records of meetings. The Evaluation Questionnaire for Resource Teachers was sent to them for completion. They were also asked to distribute the Evaluation Questionnaire for Classroom Teachers along with a cover letter explaining the questionnaire and thanking teachers for participating. Surveys were to be completed and returned anonymously to the writer. The rate of return was slow, and the writer made a second request asking resource teachers to encourage classroom teachers to complete and return the surveys. As a third attempt to increase the number of survey responses, the writer sent a second

copy of the survey to every teacher who participated with another request for completion.

Data Analysis

The writer reviewed the schedule of meetings held to determine if teachers attended meetings when they were scheduled. The writer reviewed responses to the Evaluation Questionnaires and recorded the frequency of responses to each statement. Comments made in response to the two open-ended questions were transferred to a separate page. The report card of each student was reviewed with the aid of the Report Card Checklist and the results were collated onto one master Checklist.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

At the beginning of this practicum, the instructional and assessment needs of many learning disabled students were not being met in their regular classrooms. The major goal of the practicum was to facilitate a process of communication which would enable regular education classroom teachers to provide learning disabled students more appropriate instructional and assessment opportunities within the regular education classroom. A collaboration model was developed and implemented in which resource teachers: (a) attended training in collaboration methods, (b) provided regular classroom teachers with Student Alert Forms which summarized each student's individual learning characteristics, and (c) participated in collaborative sessions with classroom teachers to develop specific Teaching / Assessment Plans (TAPs) for the students with learning disabilities. Student Alert Forms were competed by the resource room teachers and delivered to every teacher responsible for instructing a student with a learning disability within the first three weeks of school. Five resource room teachers and 27 regular classroom teachers participated in collaboration sessions and developed Teaching / Assessment Plans (TAPs) for

47 of the 61 kindergarten through sixth graders who are classified as learning disabled and who attend regular class with resource room support. At the conclusion of the project, 18 of the 27 classroom teachers and 4 of the 5 resource teachers who participated in collaboration sessions, completed and returned Evaluation Questionnaires. (A complete list of responses to the Evaluation Questionnaires can be found in Appendix E.)

1. At the end of the 12-week implementation, it was expected that regular education classroom teachers and special education resource teachers would indicate that communication between classroom teachers and resource teachers had improved. This outcome was met.

Eighteen of the 27 classroom teachers who participated in collaboration sessions, completed and returned the Evaluation Questionnaire developed for classroom teachers. As shown in Table 1, all 18 of the teachers completing the questionnaire agreed with the statement, "Collaborating with the resource teacher was helpful in planning instructional strategies to use in my classroom." Sixteen of the 18 teachers completing the questionnaire agreed with the statement, "Meetings with the resource teacher were well structured and a productive use of my time" (see Table 1).

Table 1
Classroom Teachers' Responses Regarding Effectiveness of Collaboration

4. Collaborating with the resource teacher was helpful in planning instructional strategies to use in my classroom.

strongly agree	agree	no opinion	disagree	strongly disagree
7	11	0	0	0

3. Meetings with the resource teacher were well structured and a productive use of my time.

strongly agree	agree	no opinion	disagree	strongly disagree
6	10	1	0	1

Note: N = 18

Fifteen of the 18 responding classroom teachers indicated that they would like to continue to meet with the resource teachers to update and revise TAP documents throughout the year (see Table 2). The four responding resource teachers agreed with the statement, "Meetings with the classroom teacher were well structured and a productive use of my time," but only two indicated that they would like to continue the process (see Table 2).

Table 2
Classroom and Resource Teachers' Responses to Continuing Collaboration

Classroom teachers:					
13. I would like to continue to collaborate with the resource teacher to update TAP documents throughout the year.					
	strongly agree	agree	no opinion	disagree	strongly disagree
	7	8	0	1	1
					1 no response
Resource teachers:					
8. I would like to continue to collaborate with the classroom teacher and develop TAP documents throughout the year.					
	strongly agree	agree	no opinion	disagree	strongly disagree
	0	2	0	1	0
					1 no response

Note: Classroom teachers N = 18; resource teachers N = 4

When classroom teachers were asked to comment about the aspects of the TAP collaboration process that they found helpful, one teacher responded that it is a "useful, supportive way of meeting both pupils' and teachers' needs." Another teacher reported that she found "being able to design a plan collaboratively" was helpful. One teacher wrote that she liked "focusing on specific problems and goals of each resource room child." "I felt a greater sense of support" was stated by another teacher.

Resource teachers' comments included "[the process] helped me organize strategies for the teachers to use . . . it forced us to find the time to formally meet."

Negative comments by both resource and regular classroom teachers emphasized the difficulties in scheduling. One resource teacher objected to the "paperwork" of filling out the TAP form.

2. At the end of the 12-week implementation, it was expected that classroom teachers would indicate that they used new instructional and assessment strategies with the students in their classrooms. This outcome was met.

Table 3 shows the responses of classroom teachers to questions regarding their use of instructional and assessment strategies with learning disabled students. Sixteen of the 18 responding classroom teachers indicated that, as a result of collaborating with the resource teachers, they now used different instructional techniques with the learning disabled students in their class. Fourteen of the 18 classroom teachers responded that they now used different assessment strategies with the learning disabled students in their class. Fifteen of the 18 classroom teachers reported that the new instructional strategies were successful, while eleven of the 18 classroom teachers reported that they found the new assessment strategies successful (see Table 3).

Table 3
Classroom Teachers' Responses Regarding Instructional and Assessment Strategies

7. As a result of the meetings with the resource teacher I used different instructional techniques with the learning disabled student in my classroom.				
strongly agree	agree	no opinion	disagree	strongly disagree
5	11	0	2	0
9. As a result of collaborating with the resource teacher I used different assessment strategies and methods with the learning disabled student in my classroom.				
strongly agree	agree	no opinion	disagree	strongly disagree
7	7	3	1	0
11. I found that the instructional techniques I tried were successful.				
strongly agree	agree	no opinion	disagree	strongly disagree
2	13	3	0	0
12. I found that the assessment strategies I tried were successful.				
strongly agree	agree	no opinion	disagree	strongly disagree
0	11	5	1	0
				1 no response

Note: N = 18

Classroom teachers also reported that the collaboration sessions influenced the instructional and assessment strategies that they used with students who have not been identified as learning disabled. Nine of the 18 responding classroom teachers indicated that they now used different

instructional strategies and eight of the 18 classroom teachers indicated that they now used different assessment strategies with students not identified as having learning disabilities.

3. It was expected that at the end of the 12-week implementation, regular classroom teachers would indicate that they felt more confident teaching learning disabled students. This outcome was met.

Prior to implementation, classroom teachers reported that they did not feel confident being responsible for the instruction of learning disabled students. At the conclusion of this practicum, 12 of the 18 responding classroom teachers agreed with the statement, "Participation in this project has resulted in my feeling more confident in my ability to teach learning disabled students in my classroom" (see Table 4). Two had no opinion, and four disagreed with the statement (one stating that she felt confident prior to the collaboration sessions). Resource teachers also reported increases in their level of confidence collaborating with classroom teachers (see Table 4).

Table 4
Classroom and Resource Teachers' Level of Confidence Following Collaboration Process

Classroom teachers:
1. Participation in this project has resulted in my feeling more confident in my ability to teach learning disabled students in my classroom.

strongly agree	agree	no opinion	disagree	strongly disagree
4	8	2	4	0

Resource teachers:
1. Participation in this project has resulted in my feeling more confident in my ability to consult with regular class teachers.

strongly agree	agree	no opinion	disagree	strongly disagree
1	2	0	0	0
				1 no response

Note: Classroom teachers N = 18; resource teachers N = 4

4. It was expected that at the end of the 12-week implementation, data would show that classroom teachers' attendance at student review meetings had improved and that classroom teachers with learning disabled students in their classrooms had attended at least two conferences. This outcome was partially met. Teachers' attendance at scheduled meetings was good, however, only one meeting was scheduled during the implementation period.

Throughout implementation of this practicum resource teachers kept a log of teachers' attendance at scheduled meetings. As expected, attendance rates were high. Only 2 of the 27 teachers were reported to have failed to attend scheduled meetings. According to responses to the Evaluation Questionnaires, 15 of the 18 responding classroom teachers felt that meetings were held at convenient times. On the other hand, three of the four responding resource teachers indicated that they disagreed with the statement, "Meetings with the classroom teacher were easily scheduled."

5. It was expected that at the end of the 12-week implementation, a review of report cards would indicate that teachers assign grades using consistent and clear criteria and that learning disabled students are making academic progress in their regular classes as a result of teacher use of appropriate instructional strategies in their regular classes. This outcome was partially met.

The previous review of report cards indicated that teachers assigned grades on report cards based on inconsistent criteria. Report cards of students for whom a TAP document had been developed were reviewed using the Report Card Checklist. The checklist was revised (see Appendix F) to include an indication of little or inconsistent progress.

A review of the report cards of the middle school students indicated that regular classroom teachers appropriately used the new comments regarding modifications as opposed to using previous comments which based the student's grade on effort or below grade level work. A review of the elementary report cards revealed that comments clarifying the basis for assigning grades were not included. No mention of instructional of assessment modifications was noted on any of the report cards.

The grades of 25 students suggested that the students were making satisfactory progress (students were "passing" all subject areas), while the grades of 22 students suggested that the students were making inconsistent or little progress.

Discussion

A review of the literature on students with learning disabilities placed in general education classrooms suggests that instructional modifications are necessary for student success (Ribich & Debenham, 1987; Stainback & Stainback, 1988; Wang, Reynolds, & Schwartz, 1988). The literature also suggests that collaboration between regular education teachers and special education teachers can assist regular education teachers in developing the appropriate modifications and strategies for teaching students with learning disabilities (Glomb & Morgan, 1991; Levine, 1992; Schulte, Osborne, & McKinney, 1990; Tindal, Parker, & Germann, 1990; Wang, Reynolds, & Schwartz, 1988; West & Idol, 1990). A collaboration model which focuses on individual students, rather than on categories of students has been shown to be most successful (Safran & Barcikowski, 1984). This practicum placed into practice a specific collaboration model between regular and special education teachers which provided for structured sessions and yielded a specific written plan for the regular classroom teacher. It attempted to deal with common obstacles to effective collaboration cited in the research by providing a structure which would clearly define roles and responsibilities (Johnson, Pugach, & Hammitte, 1988) and move towards decreasing the "dual system" of delivery described by Will (1986).

In general, the results presented above suggest that the collaboration model followed during implementation of this practicum had the desired outcome

of increasing communication between regular classroom teachers and special education resource teachers which resulted in modifications in instructional and assessment methods being employed for students with learning disabilities. These results are in accord with those presented in the literature (Levine, 1992; Ribich & Debenham, 1987; Schulte, Osborne, & McKinney, 1990; Tindal, Parker, & Germann, 1990; Wang, Reynolds, & Schwartz, 1988). Additionally, results of this practicum suggest that the collaboration sessions generated ideas and techniques that teachers used with students who were not classified as learning disabled. This is an important finding, since, as noted in Chapter I, the student population in this district is becoming increasingly diverse. As this trend continues it is likely that teachers will need to develop new strategies to appropriately instruct the students with many different learning styles that present in one classroom. In fact, the model implemented during this practicum has generated the interest of at least one principal who is considering adapting it to address the specialized needs of students designated as Limited English Proficient.

The results should probably be viewed with some caution as only 18 of the 27 classroom teachers who participated in the collaboration session completed and returned the Evaluation Questionnaire. It is possible that those teachers who did not bother to complete and return the form are the teachers who viewed the process as less than helpful.

Discrepancies in responses by the 18 classroom teachers and 4 resource teachers are noted and must be addressed. Resource teachers' responses suggest that they feel that formal collaboration sessions, while useful, are not necessary. Resource teachers appear to continue to feel that less formal conferences are adequate. As discussed in Chapter II, prior to the

implementation of this practicum, resource teachers felt that they were providing classroom teachers with strategies, but they also felt that their suggestions were not being adopted in the classroom. The results of this practicum suggest that the formal and written planning sessions have been helpful in ensuring that the strategies developed are being used in the classroom. The results suggest that classroom teachers actually implemented different strategies as a result of the structured collaboration meetings. Given the findings in the literature, it is not surprising to note that classroom teachers felt a greater amount of support and confidence as a result of the collaboration sessions. Prior to the implementation of this practicum, resource teachers were often called in as consultants rather than as collaborators, and it is likely that the positive responses from the classroom teachers are a result of being included in the decision-making process. This observation is supported by literature which indicates that collaboration is a more effective technique for changing teacher practices (Levine, 1992; Johnson, Pugach, & Hammitte, 1988; Stainback & Stainback, 1988; West & Idol, 1990). It is possible that a less than enthusiastic attitude from resource teachers is due to the burden of scheduling the collaboration sessions.

It is important to address the common and frequent concerns about scheduling. As noted in Chapter II, scheduling constraints are frequently cited in the literature as a reason for limited collaboration between special and regular educators (Glomb & Morgan, 1991; Johnson, Pugach, & Hammitte, 1988; Meyers, et.al.,1990). Resource teachers, who were required to initiate and schedule meetings with the classroom teacher, report that they found it difficult and time consuming to accommodate the classroom's teachers' schedules. This may relate to administration-imposed constraints regarding scheduling meetings only at certain times. However, while resource teachers found scheduling

meetings difficult, the high attendance rates of the classroom teachers may be interpreted to indicate that they appreciated the consideration given them and suggests that it was worth the effort.

It had been expected that classroom teachers would have the opportunity to attend two collaboration conferences during the first quarter, but scheduling difficulties resulted in each teacher participating in only one formal session. Comments suggest however, that informal conferences between the resource and classroom teacher may have increased following the initial collaboration session.

A review of the number of collaboration sessions successfully held by each resource teacher indicates considerable variability among teachers. Some resource teachers were able to schedule collaboration sessions for every learning disabled student on their class list. Others were able to collaborate on as few as five students. An informal analysis suggests that resource teachers' success in scheduling meetings is related to a combination of factors, including the climate of the particular building they were assigned to and the experience level of the resource teacher. Beginning resource teachers had a lower rate of successful collaboration meetings. This suggests that more time and training should be devoted to helping new resource teachers approach classroom teachers with confidence.

A review of the TAP documents also reveals that the quality varies from teacher to teacher. Several TAP documents were exactly the same, despite their being written for individual students who had different classroom teachers. Some TAP documents ignored the assessment portion. These issues were addressed individually with resource teachers at the mid-way point of implementation, but

these observations suggest that additional training and support in writing individual strategies might be appropriate for some resource teachers.

As the elementary report card format was revised during the summer, it is difficult to make direct comparisons between past practices and present grading practices. The regular classroom teachers' failure to include comments on the elementary report cards is disappointing. It is possible that this is because the revised report cards were not made available until two weeks before grades were to be recorded and the resource teachers may not have had a chance to discuss comments with the teachers. However, a review of TAP documents also suggests that assessment strategies were the weakest component of the TAP. Developing assessment and grade reporting strategies should be a priority of future training sessions with resource teachers. It is encouraging to note that half of the fifth and sixth grade teachers availed themselves of the revised comments regarding the use of modified instructional and assessment strategies. Of course, since fifth and sixth graders often have several teachers and the resource teacher may have met with only one of the student's teachers, it is impossible to determine whether it was the teachers who collaborated with the resource teachers who used the more appropriate comments.

Although the results of this practicum are encouraging, it is felt that the current implementation period was too short to allow teachers and students to fully benefit from collaboration. A second 10-week period, allowing teachers to meet again to discuss and revise TAP documents is being planned by the Director of Special Education. Prior to that, resource teachers will be asked to attend another training session. The results reported here suggest that the newer, less experienced teachers would benefit from additional support,

particularly in the areas of recommending assessment strategies and dealing with report card issues.

This practicum demonstrates that, despite time constraints and scheduling difficulties, there are benefits to structured collaboration. The introduction of a written document appears to structure collaboration sessions and increase the productiveness of the sessions. Results suggest that this leads to the actual implementation of alternative instructional and assessment strategies in the regular classroom of students with learning difficulties. As shown, the alternative strategies can benefit both students who are identified as learning disabled and those who are not as well as increasing the confidence of regular classroom teachers.

Recommendations

To ensure the success of a collaboration model such as the one described in this practicum, additional training and support should be given to the resource teachers. Additional training sessions at the beginning of implementation, particularly for newer teachers, might increase the effectiveness of the collaboration sessions.

Increased understanding of the critical importance of collaboration in the success of learning disabled students by regular education administrators and teachers may result in fewer obstacles during implementation. It is suggested that prior to implementation, regular education administrators and teachers be introduced to (a) the importance of instructional and assessment modifications in the regular classroom for learning disabled students, and (b) the effectiveness of collaboration in implementing modifications. This could be accomplished by presentations at faculty and staff meetings.

Dissemination

The results of this practicum have been shared with the Director of Special Education. Plans have been made to inform the Superintendent of Schools of the results as well. Resource room teachers have been invited to a meeting during the next semester to review the practicum and discuss continuation of the collaboration model using the TAP document. Additionally, the process has been shared at a conference attended by representatives of six nearby school districts.

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APPENDIX A

TAP EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRES

Evaluation Questionnaire

Classroom Teachers

Please answer the following questions as honestly as possible. The results will be used to evaluate the use of the Teaching/Assessment Plan (TAP) document and will be included, anonymously, in the final report of the TAP project.

This scale requires you to decide if you strongly agree, agree, have no opinion, disagree or strongly disagree with certain statements. At the end of this section, there are open-ended questions for your comments. Please be as specific as possible.

Thank-you for your time and your commitment to the students you teach and to this project.

strongly agree	agree	no opinion	disagree	strongly disagree
1	2	3	4	5

1 2 3 4 5 1. Participation in this project has resulted in my feeling more confident in my ability to teach learning disabled students in my classroom.

1 2 3 4 5 2. Meetings with the resource teacher were held at a convenient time.

1 2 3 4 5 3. Meetings with the resource teacher were well structured and a productive use of my time.

1 2 3 4 5 4. Collaborating with the resource teacher was helpful in planning instructional strategies to use in my classroom.

1 2 3 4 5 5. The TAP document was easy to prepare with the resource teacher.

1 2 3 4 5 6. I found that I referred to the TAP document when planning my lessons.

1 2 3 4 5 7. As a result of the meetings with the resource teacher I used different instructional techniques with the learning disabled student in my classroom.

1 2 3 4 5 8. As a result of the meetings with the resource teacher I used different instructional techniques with non-learning disabled students in my classroom.

1 2 3 4 5 9. As a result of collaborating with the resource teacher I used different assessment strategies and methods with the learning disabled student in my classroom.

1 2 3 4 5 10. As a result of collaborating with the resource teacher I used different assessment strategies and methods with the non-learning disabled students in my classroom.

1 2 3 4 5 11. I found that the instructional techniques I tried were successful.

1 2 3 4 5 12. I found that the assessment strategies I tried were successful.

1 2 3 4 5 13. I would like to continue to collaborate with the resource teacher to update TAP documents throughout the year.

14. I found the following aspects of the TAP process were helpful:

15. I found the following aspects of the TAP process were not helpful:

Evaluation Questionnaire

Resource Teachers

Please answer the following questions as honestly as possible. The results will be used to evaluate the use of the Teaching/Assessment Plan (TAP) document and will be included, anonymously, in the final report of the TAP project.

This scale requires you to decide if you strongly agree, agree, have no opinion, disagree or strongly disagree with certain statements. At the end of this section, there are open-ended questions for your comments. Please be as specific as possible.

Thank-you for your time and your commitment to the students you teach and to this project.

strongly agree	agree	no opinion	disagree	strongly disagree
1	2	3	4	5

1 2 3 4 5 1. Participation in this project has resulted in my feeling more confident in my ability to consult with regular class teachers.

1 2 3 4 5 2. Meetings with the regular classroom teacher were easily scheduled.

1 2 3 4 5 3. Meetings with the classroom teacher were well structured and a productive use of my time.

1 2 3 4 5 4. The TAP document was easy to prepare.

1 2 3 4 5 5. Teachers used the TAP document when creating lessons.

1 2 3 4 5 6. As a result of using the TAP document, I believe that the learning disabled students were instructed appropriately in their regular classes.

1 2 3 4 5 7. As a result of using the TAP document, I believe that the learning disabled students were assessed appropriately in their regular classes.

1 2 3 4 5 8. I would like to continue to collaborate with the classroom teacher and develop TAP documents throughout the year.

9. I found the following aspects of the TAP process were helpful:

10. I found the following aspects of the TAP process were not helpful:

APPENDIX B

REPORT CARD CHECKLIST

Report Card Checklist

The following criteria will be used to review reports cards:

_____Report card states that the grade is based on effort.

_____Report card states that the grade is based on achievement.

_____Report card states that the grade is based on modified assignments/assessments.

_____If based on modified assignments/assessments, specific modifications are clearly indicated.

_____Report card indicates that student is making academic progress.

_____Report card indicates that student is adjusting well to the regular classroom setting.

APPENDIX C

STUDENT ALERT FORM

ELEMENTARY STUDENT ALERT FORM

STUDENT NAME:_____GRADE:_____

RESOURCE TEACHER:_____

CLASSROOM TEACHER:_____

SPECIAL SUBJECT TEACHERS:_____

STUDENT STRENGTHS:_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

STUDENT WEAKNESSES:_____

_____

_____

_____

MEASURED RANGE OF ABILITY:_____

IEP MODIFICATIONS:_____

_____

_____

SPECIAL NOTES:_____

September, 1993

Dear Colleague,

Attached you will find Student Alert forms for any students in your classes who are classified as learning disabled and will be seen by me during the 93-94 school year. This form summarizes the student's strengths and weakness and hopefully will help you plan your lessons.

I am inviting you to meet with me on a monthly basis to discuss the individual needs of the learning disabled students in your classroom and to develop specific instructional and assessment goals for them. This is to be a collaborative effort and should enhance the performance of your students and well as reduce your frustrations in planning lessons and grading report cards.

I will be in touch with you soon regarding setting up the first meeting. It is expected that each meeting will last approximately 30 to 45 minutes. At the end of each meeting, we will have developed a written Teaching / Assessment Plan (TAP) to aid in the instruction and assessment of your students.

APPENDIX D

TEACHING/ASSESSMENT PLAN

TAP DOCUMENT

Student _____ Teacher: _____

TEACHING / ASSESSMENT PLAN
TAP

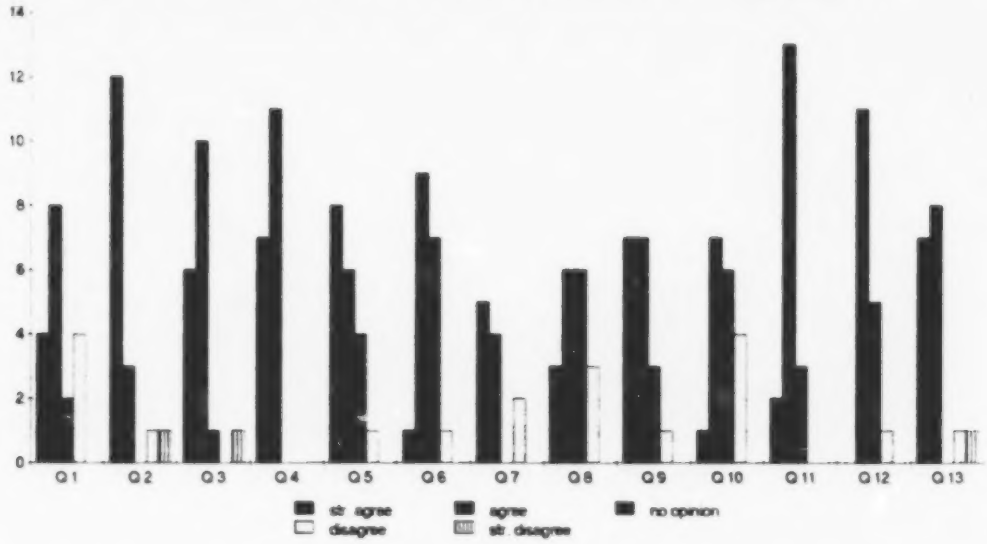
SUBJECT AREA	ACADEMIC GOAL	INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES	ASSESSMENT METHODS

APPENDIX E

CLASSROOM AND RESOURCE TEACHERS' RESPONSES TO THE EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRES

The following charts display the frequency of various responses to the questions on the Evaluation Questionnaires by classroom teachers (Figure 1) and resource teachers (Figure 2). The questions are listed on the pages following each table.

Figure 1: Classroom Teachers' Responses to Evaluation Questionnaire



Note: Questions (Q) can be found on following page.

Classroom Teachers' Evaluation Questionnaire

Q 1. Participation in this project has resulted in my feeling more confident in my ability to teach learning disabled students in my classroom.

Q 2. Meetings with the resource teacher were held at a convenient time.

Q 3. Meetings with the resource teacher were well structured and a productive use of my time.

Q 4. Collaborating with the resource teacher was helpful in planning instructional strategies to use in my classroom.

Q 5. The TAP document was easy to prepare with the resource teacher.

Q 6. I found that I referred to the TAP document when planning my lessons.

Q 7. As a result of the meetings with the resource teacher I used different instructional techniques with the learning disabled student in my classroom.

Q 8. As a result of the meetings with the resource teacher I used different instructional techniques with non-learning disabled students in my classroom.

Q 9. As a result of collaborating with the resource teacher I used different assessment strategies and methods with the learning disabled students in my classroom.

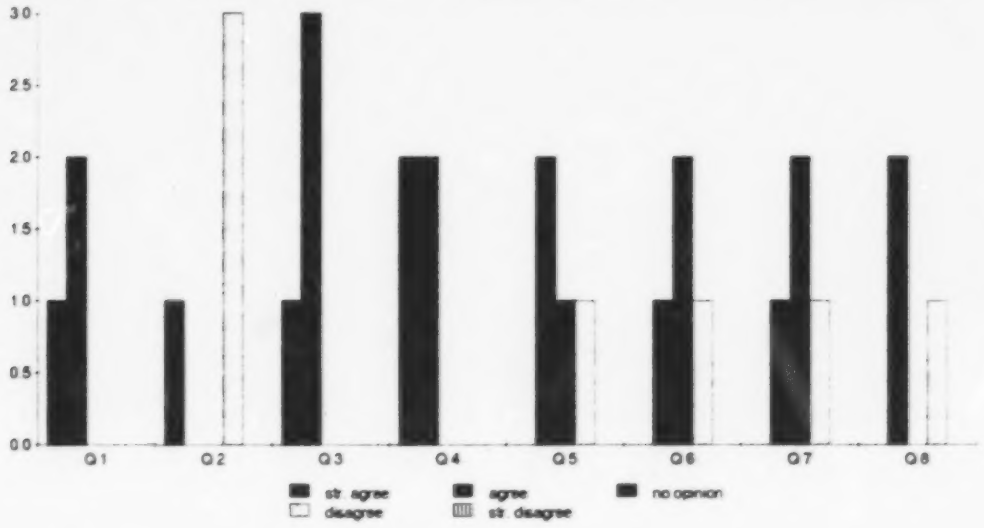
Q 10. As a result of collaborating with the resource teacher I used different assessment strategies and methods with the non-learning disabled students in my classroom.

Q11. I found that the instructional techniques I tried were successful.

Q 12. I found that the assessment strategies I tried were successful.

Q 13. I would like to continue to collaborate with the resource teacher to update TAP documents throughout the year.

Figure 2: Resource Room Teachers' Responses to Evaluation Questionnaire



Note: Questions (Q) can be found on following page.

Resource Teachers' Evaluation Questionnaire

Q 1. Participation in this project has resulted in my feeling more confident in my ability to consult with regular class teachers.

Q 2. Meetings with the regular classroom teacher were easily scheduled.

Q 3. Meetings with the classroom teacher were well structured and a productive use of my time.

Q 4. The TAP document was easy to prepare.

Q 5. Teachers used the TAP document when creating lessons.

Q 6. As a result of using the TAP document, I believe that the learning disabled students were instructed appropriately in their regular classes.

Q 7. As a result of using the TAP document, I believe that learning disabled students were assessed appropriately in their regular classes.

Q 8. I would like to continue to collaborate with the classroom teacher and develop TAP documents throughout the year.

APPENDIX F

REVISED REPORT CARD CHECKLIST

Revised Report Card Checklist

The following criteria was used to review reports cards:

_____Report card states that the grade is based on effort.

_____Report card states that the grade is based on achievement.

_____Report card states that the grade is based on modified assignments/assessments.

_____If based on modified assignments/assessments, specific modifications are clearly indicated.

_____Report card indicates that student is making academic progress.

_____Report card indicates that student is making inconsistent or little progress.

_____Report card indicates that student is adjusting well to the regular classroom setting.

_____Report card contains no comment as to what grade is based on.